

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Restaurants Targeted With Misleading Advertising

BISMARCK, N.D. – Restaurants throughout North Dakota are receiving letters falsely informing them they must post hand-washing signs at all sinks or face a large fine or jail time, according to Kenan Bullinger, director of the Division of Food and Lodging for the North Dakota Department of Health. The company sending the letters then offers to sell such signs for \$20 each.

According to Bullinger, state law does not require restaurants to post signs at hand-washing stations, so there is no fine or jail time imposed for not doing so.

"The letters look as though they come from an official regulatory agency. However, they do not," Bullinger said. "This appears to be a deceptive ploy to drum up business."

The letters come from a business calling itself the "North Dakota Food Service Compliance Center." Similar letters have surfaced in multiple states, including Montana, Iowa, Kansas, Alabama and North Carolina.

"Hand-washing is an essential practice in all food-service establishments," Bullinger said. "But it's up to the restaurant to decide how to remind its employees. Many of the state's restaurants voluntarily post such signs to encourage good hygiene among employees."

Bullinger added that restaurants can get free hand-washing signs from their local public health units or the state health department.

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The Department of Health has notified the North Dakota Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division. The department also has notified local public health units and asked them to alert their local food establishments.

For more information, contact Kenan Bullinger at 701.328.1291 or kbulling@nd.gov.

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